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PERMANENT SOVEREIGNTY OVER
NATIONAL RESOURCES IN THE
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN AND
OTHER ARAB TERRITORIES

Economic and social consequences of the establishment of settlements by Israel in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The question of the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and their social and economic consequences has been dealt with in many reports. In 1979, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 446 (1979) in which it determined that the Israeli policy and practices of establishing settlements in these territories had no legal validity and constituted a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. This position was reaffirmed unanimously in resolution 465 (1980), the preamble of which emphasizes the need to consider measures for the impartial protection of public and private land, property, and the area's water resources. In 1980, the International Labour Conference also expressed its concern regarding the establishment of settlements, and called for an end to this policy and for existing settlements to be dismantled.

2. In 1991, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) submitted a report on the subject of the Israeli settlements to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly (A/46/263-E/1991/88). In 1992,

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* A/47/50.

the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories prepared a report on the same issue which was transmitted to the General Assembly in document A/47/76. Recently, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) issued a report on the situation of workers of the occupied territories and submitted it to the International Labour Conference at its seventy-ninth session (1992). 1/

3. The term "settlement" in this paper is meant to apply to any Israeli civil or military installation in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. Israel has extended its jurisdiction, legislation and administration to East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. It should be noted that Israeli legislation applies to the settlers, regardless of the fact that they reside outside the territory of the State of Israel.

4. The building of settlements began immediately after the Six-Day War in 1967, with the first being established in the Golan Heights; settlements are planned and controlled by the Government. This policy has been developed more or less intensively since that time, and at an even more accelerated pace since the beginning of 1991. Massive Jewish immigration to Israel from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the countries of Eastern Europe, and Ethiopia (approximately 200,000 in 1990 and 200,000 in 1991) has led the Government to intensify the building of housing in the territories of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan. 1/ The increase in prices and demand for housing in Israel has led many Israelis to move to the settlements in the occupied territories. They are encouraged to do so - mainly through financial and tax incentives offered by the Government. Loans are more concessionary, infrastructure is provided free of charge, and there are substantial tax discounts. During the 1990 fiscal year, the Government of Israel spent (on the settlements) a total of 1,500 million shekels in the occupied territories, which is equal to three times the amount spent during any other year in the territories since 1967. 2/

5. According to a report by the Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem Post, 6 April 1992), "the number of building starts in the territories quadrupled during 1991, while building starts country-wide doubled", making it extremely difficult for the Arab population to obtain building permits. In addition, 5,565 mobile and prefabricated homes were installed in 1991, according to information obtained from the Ministry of Finance. 3/ The increased investment by the authorities is the result of a political determination expressed from the beginning of the occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Golan and the Gaza Strip. It has been reiterated on several occasions by the Minister of Housing that "Israel will continue its 'unprecedented' settlement activity" in the territories and "there has been no change in the Government's decision to build" on land throughout this region (Jerusalem Post, 31 January 1992).

6. On 8 April 1992, the Council of Jewish Communities launched a major campaign to encourage tens of thousands of Jews to move to houses currently under construction in the territories; the aim was to settle 70,000 persons within a year in the occupied territories.

7. On 26 August 1991, the Housing Minister outlined at a Knesset debate his plan for the long-term construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. The plan included a ring of new housing units around Jerusalem and Jericho, and the expansion and/or construction of others near Nablus and Tulkarim and in the Gaza Strip. In total, there were about 19,000 units at various stages of construction in the occupied territories as of 12 September 1991 (Ha'aretz, 12 September 1991). In addition, a new neighbourhood of 300 housing units is to be set up in north-east Jerusalem so as to establish a succession of Jewish settlements around the city. The Arabs represent 55 per cent of the residents of East Jerusalem, while the Jews represent 45 per cent (or 140,000 Arabs and 120,000 Jews). The Government wants to establish a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem by directing 60,000 emigrants to Jerusalem in the next three years (Ha'aretz, 20 September 1991).

8. On 11 October 1991, it was reported that some 4,300 new emigrants had settled in the territories since January 1990, as indicated by the Finance Ministry's latest information (Jerusalem Post, 11 October 1991).

9. On 4 November 1991, a new settlement (Bruchim) was inaugurated in the Golan Heights by the Ministers of Housing, Energy and Agriculture. The settlement should be established within the next three years and will house over 40,000 people (Ha'aretz, 6 October 1991 and Jerusalem Post, 5 November 1991).

10. In the occupied territories, the indigenous Arab community - governed by a civil administration under the authority of the Israeli Ministry of Defence and subject to specific legislation - develops separately from the newly established Jewish Israeli community. This dual legal and administrative system applicable to the two peoples was highlighted in the country report on human rights practices for 1990 of the United States Department of State. The report emphasizes that "Palestinians - both Muslim and Christian - are treated less favourably than Israeli settlers on a broad range of issues, including equality before the law, the right to residence, freedom of movement, sale of crops and goods, land and water use, and access to health and social services". The Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq (affiliated with the International Commission of Jurists) adds in this respect that "In fact, Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem governed by Israeli law, are designed to benefit the Israeli population of the settlers to the detriment of the autochthonous Palestinian population." Al-Haq and other Palestinian sources pointed out that the benefits and subsidies granted to settlers by the Government are components of a situation in which 65 per cent of the Arab lands of the West Bank were confiscated illegally by the authorities and where Palestinian towns and villages are encircled and isolated by the plans for the development of the settlements. Furthermore, there are no projects for the urban or rural development of the Palestinian agglomerations or for their improvement or expansion. 4/

11. Over the course of time, the Israeli Government has expropriated - and continues to expropriate - the Arab land of the occupied territories, whether cultivated, non-cultivated, pasture or inhabited, under four separate categories:

(a) The land "abandoned" by the populations displaced since 1948;

(b) The land formerly registered in the name of the Government of Jordan, and the land of Arab owners who have never been able to prove ownership;

(c) Land confiscated for military purposes;

(d) Land which is deemed to serve Israeli public interest.

12. In addition, Arab land is also subject to restrictions concerning its use under Military Order No. 393 of 1970 - applied in cases where land surrounds settlements, camps, military installations or access routes to the settlements. In some regions, fertile Palestinian land has been sacrificed to secure access routes; many vineyards have been destroyed between Bethlehem and Hebron for this purpose.

13. On the basis of the applied Israeli laws and regulations, the following land areas were confiscated between June 1967 and the end of 1990: 5/

(a) A total of 2,895,642 dunums in the occupied West Bank, representing 52.6 per cent of the total land area of the West Bank;

(b) A total of 153,475 dunums in the Gaza Strip, representing 42.3 per cent of the total land area of the Gaza Strip;

(c) 69.4 per cent of the total land area of the Syrian Golan.

14. According to Israeli statistics, there were 82,000 settlers as of 31 December 1990, divided between the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. This figure does not reflect the real situation at present, since in 1991 settlements grew at a rate of 60 per cent, according to Palestinian sources and the Israeli Peace Now movement (Jerusalem Post, 23 January 1992). The Israeli Ministry of Finance stated in January 1992 that there were 130,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem, where there are more than 120,000) and 4,000 to 5,000 in the Gaza Strip; in the Golan, there are allegedly more than 13,000. The number of settlers in the occupied territories is thus around 268,000. The total number of settlements is estimated at 194: 33 in the Golan, 17 in the Gaza Strip, 8 in East Jerusalem and 136 in the West Bank. 6/

15. Whether in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, the development of Jewish settlements has only worsened the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian population and is a source of tension. Clashes occur with increasing frequency between the two communities, and the Israeli settlers have organized themselves into an armed militia. 6/

16. A study prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on recent economic developments in the occupied Palestinian territories (TD/B/1142) indicated that the policy, practices and measures of the Israeli Government vis-à-vis their occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had brought about radical changes in the structure of the economy, adversely affecting economic growth and development in the occupied territories and reducing the contribution to GDP. The study demonstrated clearly that the total cultivated area had decreased from 36 per cent of the total land area of the occupied West Bank in 1966 to 27 per cent in 1984, and in the occupied Gaza Strip, from 55 per cent of the total area in 1966 to 28 per cent in 1985.

17. Confiscation of land adversely affected agricultural production and income in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; income from agriculture declined from 1,505 million shekels in 1978 to 1,488 million shekels in 1984 at constant 1980 prices. As a result, the share of agriculture in GDP declined (at constant prices) from 32 per cent in 1978 to 28 per cent in 1984, according to another UNCTAD study (UNCTAD/ST/SEU/4).

18. According to the same study, income from agriculture in the West Bank declined from $237 million in 1981 to $204 million in 1985. In the Gaza Strip, it declined from $66 million in 1981 to $61 million in 1985, in spite of the fact that farmers were making increasing use of modern techniques in order to improve agricultural production in those areas.

19. As a result of the negative impact of the confiscation of agricultural land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, employment in agriculture fell from 38.7 per cent of the total workforce in 1970 to 24.4 per cent in 1985.

20. According to a report of the ILO, on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, submitted to the International Labour Conference at its seventy-seventh session in 1990, "Endogenous development efforts are frequently frustrated or undone for administrative or security reasons." 7/ While evaluating the impact of Israeli policies and practices on the agricultural sector, the report highlighted the following points:

(a) Agriculture remains the backbone of the economy but performance over the decade has been disappointing for lack of land, water and markets; 8/

(b) Despite increased productivity as a result of the introduction of new technologies in agriculture, corresponding new marketing opportunities were lacking;

(c) "Agricultural employment in the occupied territories dropped from almost 60,000 workers in 1970 to 38,500 workers in 1987." The share of agricultural employment also dropped from 40 per cent to around 25 per cent: "In other words, thousands of workers left because they or their employers had lost their land or could not expand for lack of water; or because they could

not compete in the home market with subsidized imports from Israel; or because they found barriers to buying farm inputs or to selling their products abroad." 9/

21. The general settlement policy of confiscating land and imposing restrictions on water resouces has meant that a large proportion of the population that would normally have earned a living by traditional agriculture have gradually begun to seek employment in Israel as unskilled workers because of the lack of jobs in the territories. This appears to be partially responsible for the economic dependence of the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories on Israel, particularly as regards agricultural produce.

22. Mention should also be made of the uprooting of fruit trees by Israeli authorities from Arab farm land in the occupied territories. The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz (29 March 1989) noted that the Israeli authorities had uprooted 23,400 trees in the occupied territories during the first year of the intifadah.

23. A survey concerning fruit trees uprooted from Arab farmers' land in the occupied territories was published in the 1989 annual report of the Jordan Ministry of Labour, as shown in the following table.

24. No less than 30,000 fruit trees were uprooted in 1989 from Arab farm land through actions by the occupation authorities connected with the confiscation of Arab land; 16,928 of these were olive trees. The number of towns and villages affected by these actions in the same year was 138.

25. As regards water resources, the Israeli authorities have issued a series of orders (orders 92 and 158 of 1967 and order 498 of 1974) to guarantee their complete monopoly over these resources, to allow them to control water transfer, extraction, consumption, sales and distribution, use, water sharing and rationing, well drilling, the construction of water installations and the like.

26. The Arab inhabitants of the Syrian Golan have been forced to demolish some of their own reservoirs, and the Israeli army has dynamited a number of others. 10/ At present, only three or four reservoirs are authorized for use out of approximately 400 that had been built in the Golan. The Israeli authorities have imposed tight restrictions on water use in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan. Permits are sometimes granted to drill wells to depths not exceeding 60 metres for domestic purposes only, while Israelis in the settlements are allowed to drill to depths of up to 500 metres.

27. Several hundred water pumps owned by Arab farmers in the Jordan Valley area of the West Bank have been destroyed for security reasons. Irrigation canals which supplied water to Arab farms in the area of Al-Jiftlik have also been destroyed. This has had an adverse effect on agriculture and on the economic and social life of these areas.

Destruction of trees and crops, 1989

Month	Olive trees uprooted	Citrus trees uprooted	Other fruit trees uprooted	Number of Arab towns and villages affected
January	2 285	210	90	14
February	925	105	200	10
March	1 417	..	330	9
April	3 337	100	7 000	16
May	4 110	2 400 dunums of crops ploughed under	12 dunums of grapes	22
June	847	50 dunums of crops ploughed under	550 dunums sprayed with chemical substances	10
July	120	300	3	8
August	2 033	112	4 dunums ploughed under	12
September	621	380	430	12
October	177	60	2 620	14
November	251	30	..	5
December	805	..	..	6

Source: Compiled from Government of Jordan, Ministry of Labour, Research Department, "The impact of Israeli policies and practices on the conditions of Arab workers in the occupied Arab territories" (in Arabic), Annual Report, 1989 (Amman, January 1990).

28. Ram Lake, the largest body of water in the Syrian Golan, has been seized by the Israeli authorities. As a result, villages in the Golan have suffered a critical shortfall in drinking and irrigation water, while the water of Ram Lake has been diverted to Israeli settlements to satify the needs of the settlers and their agricultural and industrial projects in the area.

29. The consequences of Israeli water policies and practices may be described as follows:

(a) A state of conflict and competition over land and water resources has arisen and continues to prevail; this has had an adverse impact on the living conditions of Palestinians. The Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley, for example, are in direct competition with the Arab villages for the limited resources of the West Bank; 11/

(b) The usable groundwater reserves in the West Bank are estimated at approximately 600 million m^3 per year. The Israeli occupation authorities are currently pumping approximately 500 million m^3 per year, leaving only 100 million m^3 per year for use by the West Bank, or 16.6 per cent of the total water available in the West Bank;

(c) The deep wells drilled by the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories have affected the level and quantity of water in Arab wells, resulting in their reduced productive capacity and in the drying up of some of those wells and in the subsequent drying up of agricultural land that depended on those wells for irrigation water;

(d) The overexploitation of groundwater in the Gaza Strip and the great increase in water use by settlers in Israeli settlements have resulted in increased salinity through sea-water intrusion. Approximately 50 per cent of the wells in the Gaza Strip have become unfit for human use, and most of them are unfit even for irrigation, owing to the high salinity levels;

(e) As in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the continued arbitrary practices of the Israeli occupation authorities, which aim at confiscating land and gaining control of water resources in the occupied Syrian Golan, have reduced the area under cultivation, curtailed local development potential and lowered local incomes derived from work in agriculture.

Notes

1/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices, vol. II (Geneva, 1992), paras. 116 and 117.

2/ Amiram Goldbloom, "Are settlements an obstacle to peace?" New Outlook, June/July/August 1991.

Notes (continued)

3/ Ha'aretz, reprinted in the Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds, 23 January 1991.

4/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices ..., paras. 116, 117 and 121.

5/ "Israeli land and water policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories" (A/46/263-E/1991/88), para. 38.

6/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices ..., paras. 124 and 126.

7/ Ibid., appendix II, "Report on the situation of workers in occupied Arab territories" (Geneva, 1990).

8/ Ibid., para. 21.

9/ Ibid., para. 41.

10/ Ibid., para. 111.

11/ David Kahan, "Agriculture and water in the West Bank and Gaza", report of the West Bank database project (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 163-166.